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Some of the current approaches to the teaching of film include utilizing the medium as an audio-visual aid, as an attempt to inundate the student with sensations, or in a study of cinema arts and film manufacture. However, the integration of film and literature, in which students can see how each medium functions, seems most viable. Films and literature are similar in that they both are part of the humanities, both are oriented toward content, and both offer entertainment; the two media differ in that films deal with action whereas literature emphasizes thought and abstraction, and also in that film conveys time by the manipulation of space while literature conveys it by the use of tense. The complementary aspects of literature and film can best be illustrated by a thematic approach--e.g., a study of man's interaction with machines, in which works of film and literature consider man in the absence of machines and in positive or negative relationships with machines. Such a thematic approach (perhaps combined with experience in actually making filsm) helps students to better understand the problems and limitations of both film and literature. (LH)

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In today's maze of media messages our contemporary screens—both movie and television—are making direct and significant statements about the nature and purpose of life, statements which we as teachers dare not let go unheeded or misunderstood.
James Satterthwaite, "Films in the Junior High—A Working Program," a paper delivered at the CCTE Annual Convention in Calgary, August, 1968.

An Integrated Approach to the Teaching of Film and Literature

John Stuart Katz

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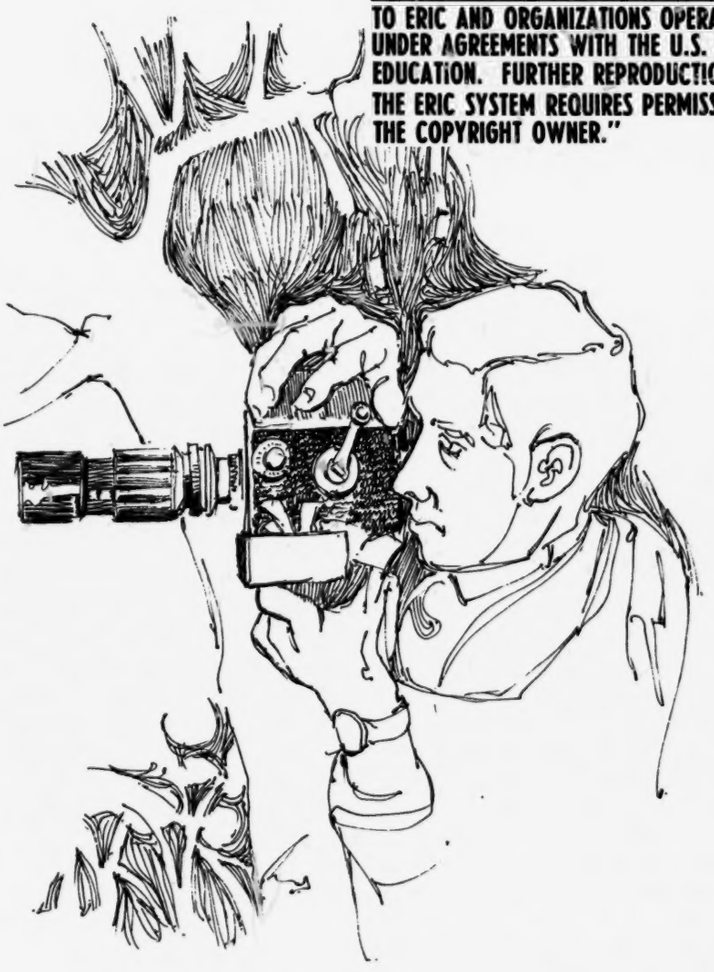

An Integrated Approach to the Teaching of Film and Literature*

For many English teachers the teaching of film is an exciting idea. To demonstrate this, one need only point to the programme of this convention, the work of such organizations as the National Film Board, the American Film Institute and the British Film Institute, as well as the numerous articles on film in journals in the teaching of English. We have every reason to believe not only that film will continue to be taught in the schools, but that its use will increase. Teachers and other educators should, however, be wary of jumping on a bandwagon. There is still a great need in screen education for extensive research, curriculum development work, and the training of teachers. Those who wish to deal successfully with film in the classroom must understand the medium and why they are teaching it.

One can identify at least four current approaches to the teaching of film, each of which has its own rationale and educational implication. Although these approaches are not mutually exclusive, they do exemplify divergent attitudes prevalent in screen education. The first two approaches illustrate what I believe is a dysfunctional use of the medium. The third approach would probably do most justice to film *per se*, but seems impractical in many schools and for most teachers. The fourth attempts to integrate film study with the knowledge and curriculum realities of both teachers and students without ignoring film's essential uniqueness.

Film has been used in the schools primarily as an audio-visual aid. Students studying Shakespeare are rewarded with, or subjected to, a filmed version of the play being studied or an "instructional" film on the Elizabethan theatre. In such cases film acts merely as a "handmaiden" to the material in which the teacher is really interested. It is unlikely that this approcah to film has resulted in enhancing students' appreciation of the medium. In fact, it has probably done just the opposite.

Another approach to film study was spawned by McLuhan and his disciples, whose incessant bombardments are sometimes called the Marshall Plan, or McLunacy by those less generous. At its extreme, this approach manifests itself in attempts to inundate the students in media. Don't interpret. Don't analyse. Just fill the classroom with films, T.V., records, strobe lights, and let the students react as they will. The teacher using this approach acts as a non-interfering anthropologist watching the *primitifs* perform rites which we outsiders from the pre-electronic generation can never fully understand.

Thirdy, are two approaches, cinema arts and film-making, which I consider here as one, because they frequently are combined in the classroom and tend to treat film in a highly specialized way. The cinema art approach usually concerns itself with the history, aesthetics, appreciation and even the economics of film, while the film-making approach deals with technique and production. Too often, however, these courses see film as if it had sprung full blown from D. W. Griffith's head and with no relationship to any other art form. Moreover, these courses find themselves under the rubric of English for what appears, to both teacher and student, to be no reason other than expediency.

The fourth approach integrates the study of film with the study of literature. It is this approach I find most viable. To me, film is an art form, like literature, and is worthy of study *in* and *for* itself.

* This paper was delivered at the First Annual Convention of CCTE in Calgary, August, 1968.

Paradoxically, despite its uniqueness, the study of film when integrated with the study of literature allows students to see how each medium works and to explore the similarities and the differences between the two media. When students study film and literature together, they are able to understand not only the meaning or message of a particular work of art, but also what each medium is forced to do, what it is able to do most successfully, and what it seems unable to do.

Let us, for a moment, look at some of the similarities and differences between film and literature which are worth pursuing with secondary school students. The relationships to be discussed reflect what has happened historically in the mainstream of film and literature—although recent films, like many recent literary works, have attempted to overcome these conventions and limitations. But even if one must use the exceptions to prove the rule, there is value in a comparison and analysis of the fundamentals of the two media.

In 1897, in his Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, Joseph Conrad said, "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*." Fifteen years later, the film-maker D. W. Griffith said, "The task I'm trying to achieve is, above all, to make you see." Griffith was not necessarily commenting on visual perception. He was referring to the same task as Conrad—that of enabling the reader or viewer to go beyond apprehending to comprehending, to go beyond visceral reactions to an understanding of the sense of the work.

Both literature and film are liberating arts; they are part of the humanities. They make the viewer or reader aware of outward realities and of his own inward life. Both, as Northrop Frye says of literature, develop and educate the imagination. Both film and literature present to us an artist's ordering of the chaos of human experience. With the possible exception of "l'art pour l'art", the poet, the novelist, the film-maker, uses the pen or the camera to express a particular attitude towards some aspect of human experience.

Literature and film are similar also in that both tend to be content oriented. With some exceptions of course, both media make extensive use of the narrative mode. Both require cognitive participation in order to have the reader or viewer understand them. Finally, both film and literature frequently offer some form of entertainment. These last two components, understanding and entertainment, are reminiscent of the *utile et dulce* of which Horace speaks in defining the function of poetry.

When exploring relationships between film and literature, one must also examine the basic differences between the two media. To state that words are the fundamental tool of literature and pictures that of film is to make, for all of its obviousness, an important distinction. Just as a picture of a horse is not the horse itself, so the picture is also different from that image evoked by the word "horse", no matter how many modifiers the word may have. The imagination educed by literature is qualitatively different from that educed by film.

Film, because of its immediacy and its appearance of concreteness, usually deals more successfully with actions than with thoughts. Literature, on the other hand, deals with thoughts and abstractions just as easily as with actions. For example, Meursault, in Camus' *The Stranger*, has a detachment and an inwardness which are reflected in the way he recounts his story. Although he quotes directly the words of others, the judge and the priest for example, he seldom relates to the reader his exact words to them. Meursault tells the judge *that* it was by chance he had the gun and returned to the spot in which the Arab rested and similarly tells the priest *that* he does not believe in God.

In the film, however, Visconti must transform the essence of what Meursault tells us *about* into something we can see, hear, or both. Visconti's Meursault, therefore, enters the realm of action.

One further difference between the two media lies in their handling of time and space. Whereas literature tends to convey time by the use of tense, film tends to convey time by the manipulation of space. In film, everything, even a flashback, happens as we watch it. The filmed version of the Ambrose Bierce short story "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" by Roberto Enrico has immediacy because it is presented to us on the screen in the only way it can be shown—before our eyes, always in the present tense. But, as we learn at the end of the film, it only *appeared* to be in the present and actually was a subjunctive. The short story, in contrast, is written in the past tense, with only the description of Farquhar returning home rendered in the present. Then the sudden switch to the past tense by describe his death creates the sharp contrast which the movie achieves by showing action as it happens.

As an example of this approach which compares and contrasts film and literature, I would like to describe briefly an experimental curriculum now being developed by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. The curriculum is a ten week "unit" being taught this year in three pilot schools in Ontario to eleventh grade academic and technical students. The course integrates the study of film with the study of literature by investigating ways in which each medium handles a particular theme. The curriculum treats film as film and literature as literature while exploring ways in which each medium deals with certain aspects of the theme which we selected to work on this year—man's relationship to machines.

We approach the theme of man's relationship to machines in three ways. First, we consider works of literature and film which depict man in the absence of, or unaffected by machines, including some Utopian and pastoral works. Secondly, we consider those works in which the machine is praised or even apotheosized for the role it plays in man's existence. And finally, there are those works in which the machine is shown as the physical or spiritual destroyer of mankind.

The students are involved in three activities related to this thematic approach. They see films, discuss them, and write about them; they read books in an individualized reading program, discuss them, and write about them; and they make movies and discuss them. The films seen and the books read are in our judgement worthwhile works of art; no film or literary work is used only because of its theme.

The students begin the course by discussing how film and literature portray man in the absence of machines. They view short films such as *Sky, Nahanni,* and *Leaf.* At the same time they have available to them, for individualized reading, literature such as *Walden, Erewhon, Who Has Seen the Wind,* and nature poetry. The students write on the theme as well as on the ways in which film and literature deal with the theme. As a corollary to the writing, they are given 8mm. cameras, some technical instruction, and are set loose in a rural or natural setting to make a short film. The course does not attempt to make professional film-makers of the students. We are more interested in the process than in the product of film-making. But by making a filmic statement, the students are forced to consider some of the medium's basic aspects such as camera angles, lighting, perspective and editing. They are, in short, as is the writer or the film-maker, ordering the chaos of their experiences. They are learning to appreciate what is involved in making a coherent statement in either medium.

Students then consider works which take an objective or positive

viewpoint towards machines. They view and discuss shorts such as *N.Y. N.Y.* and *Skyscraper* and features such as Robert Flaherty's *Louisianna Story* and Eisenstein's *The Old and the New (The General Line).* Simultaneously, they read and discuss such books as Saint Exupery's *Night Flight,* the poetry of Carl Sandburg, and science fiction by writers such as Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov and Jules Verne. Again, the students are given the 8mm. cameras and film, and set loose, this time in the middle of the city or a factory.

Next, the students see films and read books which deal with the machine as the spiritual or physical destroyer of mankind. Included here would be the short films *Day After Day, 21/87, Very Nice, Very Nice,* and the features—Godard's *Alphaville,* Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove,* and Theodore Flicker's *The President's Analyst.* Books the students might be reading at this time include *Brave New World, 1984, A Canticle for Leibowitz, Hiroshima, Octopus* and *The Grapes of Wrath.*

As a final project, students are given the opportunity to work in a group on the production of their own 16mm. film, including the script writing, acting, directing, shooting and editing.

We are now attempting to devise ways of evaluating the success of the program, and indeed, of any program in screen education. This model for a curriculum is still in the formative stages and will be for at least the next year. We are developing and testing a flexible approach which, I believe, will enable the student to "see" better, in the Griffith-Conrad sense. While it is only one approach to the study of film, it does seem to be a viable way of incorporating an important medium into the school curriculum.